NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/12

Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Distr.: General
4 May 2018

Original: English

Second session
Geneva, 23 April–4 May 2018

Chair's Reflections on the State of the NPT

It has been 50 years since the NPT was adopted, an appropriate moment to reflect on the role and achievements of the Treaty, as well as the challenges ahead.

In the fifty years since its inception, the NPT, together with the legacy of its Review Conferences, has grown into a comprehensive source of legal obligations and commitments. It has become the centerpiece of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime, combining a near-universal scope with a legally binding framework for both nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states. Its review cycle meetings provide States parties with a global platform to address issues in the areas of nuclear disarmament, nonproliferation and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Over the years the NPT has been tested and challenged. It has faced and weathered arms races, conflicts, major-power rivalries, geopolitical shifts, and perennial disagreements regarding its implementation, as well as proliferation threats in multiple corners of the world. Yet, through constant maintenance and strengthening, it has endured, adapted successfully to changing circumstances and evolved to meet challenges. The Treaty's impressive record demonstrates the essential role the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime plays in the maintenance of international peace, security and development.

The NPT has been instrumental in containing nuclear threats. It has curtailed the number of states that have acquired nuclear weapons and provided a reliable framework for some to relinquish their possession or to abandon military nuclear programs. It spurred the creation of effective verification regimes and monitoring systems, and paved the way for thriving cooperation on the development of safe nuclear energy and a range of other civilian applications that are so important for the sustainable development of the entire planet and its inhabitants.

The NPT once again faces a fragile and unpredictable international environment. States parties' opinions are divided over a number of issues, not least over the pace of disarmament. This was markedly felt during some of the PrepCom debates. We have not succeeded in resolving of a number of outstanding issues accumulated over the review cycles, some of which are outlined below. Yet, even if the Treaty is arguably not perfect, it is *the only one* that unites us all in the pursuit of the ultimate goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. It will not be replaced in the foreseeable future by any instrument that could match the NPT in its

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comprehensiveness, universality, or the flexibility offered by the integral improvement mechanism of review conferences.

Issues

In the remaining two years of the current review cycle we must carry the discussion forward in several areas:

- Our approaches still differ noticeably as regards the modalities and the pace of disarmament efforts. This gap will have to be bridged to reinvigorate the review process and pave the way for more consensual work. The recommendations of the Group of Eminent Persons for Substantive Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament contain a number of useful ideas in that regard.
- Current issues in nonproliferation have reopened the discussion on the role and comprehensiveness of nuclear safeguards, as well as on the question of non-compliance. In light of recent developments, these issues will need to be conclusively revisited.
- A way forward should be found on the operationalization of the WMD-free zone in the Middle East. New creative ideas and genuine engagement by all stakeholders in this process are required to overcome the stalemate.
- In the domain of peaceful uses we should strive to develop new initiatives to optimally unfold the potential for mutually beneficial cooperation, reconciling rigid non-proliferation standards with sustainable development goals.
- Crucial steps on important components of the regime, including an FMCT or a robust verification and compliance mechanism for nuclear disarmament, still remain ahead of us, which breeds concerns about its comprehensiveness and effectiveness. Further work is also required to ensure the entry into force of the CTBT.

Considering the above, and building on the reflections of the Chair of the 2017 session of the Preparatory Committee, the Chair invites the States parties to the Treaty to consider building on the following points in their further discussions towards the 2020 Review Conference. He takes these points to reflect basic views on the Non-Proliferation Treaty and its review cycle that appear to be shared by its States parties:

- The NPT remains of central importance to its States parties, which have reaffirmed their commitment to the Treaty and the implementation of its provisions. The Treaty and its review cycle underpin our legal and political efforts on non-proliferation, disarmament, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
- The Treaty is the cornerstone of the global regime for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and is a fundamental part of the global collective peace and security architecture. Current international geopolitical challenges underline the important role of the Treaty and the need to uphold and strengthen it.
- As its preamble reflects, the Treaty aims to safeguard its States parties and their peoples from the devastation of nuclear conflict. Regional and global security challenges impact the realization of the Treaty's objectives and therefore are rightfully considered during its review. At the same time, the implementation and development of the Treaty helps ease tensions and build confidence, contributing to a safer, more secure and more peaceful world.
- The Treaty contains shared common objectives. Despite disagreements over the pace of its implementation, progress on disarmament, non-proliferation and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes are considered to be mutually enabling, reinforcing and balancing elements.

- Therefore, it is the shared responsibility of States Parties to deliver on their commitments across all three pillars, to maintain a common purpose and ownership, and to make sure that all States parties can advance new constructive ideas in order to implement and develop the Treaty.

- The Treaty is a dynamic instrument, successfully evolving to adapt to changing political, technological, military and other circumstances. States parties must ensure its vitality and integrity, and continue to work towards the universalization of the Treaty.

- The Treaty benefits all its States parties and plays an important role in regional dialogues on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The broad ownership of the Treaty is one of its strengths and should be further stimulated.

- States parties to the Treaty should aim to maintain an open, inclusive and transparent dialogue at the meetings of the Review Conference and the Preparatory Committee. To the extent discussions on divisive topics belong to the core of the review cycle, they should not impede progress on other issues.

- With a view to the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty's entry into force in 2020, we should work to identify areas where progress is possible, cooperate in order to move forward and search for compromise where necessary. Although approaches regarding the modalities and the pace of disarmament efforts contrast, we must reconcile in order to reinvigorate the review process and pave the way for consensus-based work.

The 2018 session of the Preparatory Committee saw a clear benefit in exploring options to reform the working methods of review cycle meetings to make them more efficient and effective. This should be an important topic at the 2019 session of the Preparatory Committee as well as the 2020 Review Conference. Current ways of cooperation between the chairs could set a precedent for how to manage the process with more efficiency and cohesion. The Chair offers the following for further consideration:

- As the 2020 Review Conference nears, our ideas on its outcomes will have to mature, along with our ideas on how to achieve them. We should discuss how we can build on the outcomes of the 2017 and 2018 Preparatory Committee sessions, and even more importantly, how we can conclude the 2019 Preparatory Committee successfully.

- Meetings of the Preparatory Committee should become more output-oriented if they are to serve as important stations in the process of cumulative consensus building. Finding ways to maximize the continuity of the review cycle is of great importance in this context.

- The right balance must be maintained in discussing emerging, current and structural topics related to the subject matter of the Treaty.

- The approach consisting of a program of regional outreach meetings facilitates and increases transparency and inclusivity, thus raising the sense of ownership of the NPT regime.

- Timely nominations and the establishment of the Conference Bureau early in the process are measures that could become routine procedure to strengthen the review process in practice. In the context of this review cycle it is vital that the President of the Review Conference is nominated without delay.

- The establishment of a working group at the 2020 Review Conference could provide a dedicated forum for advancing and debating ideas.